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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0966
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000840

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, S/CRS, SE WILLIAMSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: UNAMID CHIEF OF STAFF LEAVES MISSION

REF: KHARTOUM 650

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. After months of uncertainty about his possible PNG-ing, UNAMID Chief of Staff Patrick Davidson-Houston left the Mission on May 27, lamenting that he "left much undone." The majority of UNAMID officials acknowledge that Davidson-Houston's departure is a blow to the Mission, and none as vociferously as Force Commander Martin Luther Agwai himself, who avers that without Davidson-Houston, "Transfer of Authority never would have happened." Davidson-Houston's premature departure leaves the critical Chief of Staff position vacant. Top contenders to succeed him reportedly hail from Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) Kenya, Gambia, Egypt, Ethiopia and Pakistan. Neither Agwai nor Davidson-Houston sees the position being filled before at least August, and Agwai himself does not consider those candidates in the running to add value to the Mission's leadership. While two months is a long time to be without a key UNAMID player, it does afford some time for the international community to weigh in with the UN to consider other candidates for the job. END SUMMARY.

"LIKE REPLACING A V8 WITH A PRIUS HYBRID ENGINE"

¶2. (SBU) May 27 marked the last day on the job for Brigadier General Patrick Davidson-Houston (UK), Chief of Staff to the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) Force Commander. Since February credible rumors have circulated of the Government of Sudan's intent to declare Davidson-Houston persona non grata and expel him from the country as a violation of the "predominantly African character" of the UNAMID peacekeeping operation. (NOTE: The GoS ignored that such an expulsion also conflicts with the Status of Forces Agreement it signed with UNAMID, also in February, which, in paragraph 7, stipulates that the GoS "undertakes to respect the exclusively international nature of UNAMID." END NOTE).

¶3. (SBU) Davidson-Houston will transfer to Addis Ababa as Acting Force Commander overseeing the closedown of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), and he noted to FieldOff in a May 27 farewell courtesy call that Addis was only a short plane ride from Sudan, adding that his Sudanese visa (one of at least three issued to him by the GoS) was still valid. He reiterated the regret with which he is leaving the Mission, as he feels he is "leaving much undone."

¶4. (SBU) UNAMID Force Commander Agwai (Nigeria) told FieldOff that he had lobbied hard for Davidson-Houston's initial appointment as Chief of Staff, explaining that he brought to the Mission a "fresh perspective" that others did not. Agwai was emphatic that "had Patrick not been there to tie up so many loose ends for me, Transfer of Authority never would have happened." He doubted that any successor could fill Davidson-Houston's shoes from an operational standpoint. Davidson-Houston's Military Assistant Marc Lawson (UK) concurred, saying that Davidson-Houston's acting successor, Chief Operations Officer Col. Joseph Prah (Ghana), as is akin to "replacing a V8 with a Prius hybrid engine."

VIABLE ALTERNATIVE UNLIKELY

15. (SBU) Davidson-Houston did not expect his ultimate replacement to arrive "for at least two to three months, knowing the UN." He noted that UN Headquarters in New York had closed the nominations for candidates for the position on May 26 but had not yet begun interviews, and he claimed not to know who was on the short-list. The Force Commander, however, told FieldOff that candidates under consideration are from Kenya, Gambia, Egypt, Ethiopia and Pakistan. (NOTE: The Egyptian and Ethiopian candidates come as no surprise, as the additional battalions pledged by those two TCCs pushed them to the top of the list of UNAMID contributors and justified their seeking such an appointment, as reported reftel. END NOTE.) Agwai does not expect any new ideas from any of these candidates, noting that he had pushed UN Headquarters to expand the candidate pool. The UN balked in the face of the GoS' perceived resistance to any non-African appointment.

16. (SBU) Agwai noted he had had lobbied hard with AU leadership for Davidson-Houston's initial appointment, including with former Commission Chairperson Konare and former Commissioner for Peace and Security Djinnit, but he doubted that any European would be subsequently considered for any senior UNAMID post. "We will just have go on with what we get" from this more limited candidate pool, Agwai sighed.

COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

17. (SBU) Davidson-Houston's departure is a blow to the Mission, paired as it will be by mid-June with the departure of another key player, COL Murdo Urquhart, Chief of Planning. Agwai's lack of faith in the candidates put forward for Chief of Staff should be reason enough for the international community to weigh in with the UN on this appointment. We could take advantage of the expected delay in New York's deliberations on a candidate and use this time to push the UN to re-open nominations to expand the pool TCC candidates. Better still would be to make our own proposal, perhaps in conjunction with the P3. It doubtless will be a sensitive, but crucial, task given the high-profile of the post and the potentially damaging precedent that could be set if TCCs are allowed to dictate UNAMID leadership appointments.

POWERS